



**Northwestern
Michigan
College**

Office of Timothy J. Nelson, *President*

1701 East Front Street | Traverse City, Michigan 49686-3061
Ph (231) 995-1010 | Fx (231) 995-1680 | www.nmc.edu

**Testimony Before the Michigan House of Representatives
Committee for Military and Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security**

May 22, 2012

**Timothy J. Nelson, President
Northwestern Michigan College**

Good afternoon. Thank you Chairman Franz and members of the committee for allowing me to testify before you today. I am Timothy Nelson and it is my pleasure to serve as president of Northwestern Michigan College. We are one of 28 state assisted community colleges in Michigan. We are moderate in size with a student body of 5,000 to 5,500 traditional students, including approximately 250 veterans. We also have a robust University Center with nine public or private university partners serving 1,200 to 1,500 people each year. Some unique programs offered by NMC include one of only six federally chartered maritime academies, one of only four aviation programs in the state, a fresh water studies institute offering the only associate degree in that are in the U.S. and the Great Lakes Culinary Institute.

While I would like to say we exhibit all the best practices as they relate to serving active military personnel and veterans, I know better. But, I do think we are doing some things that are important and working on others. So, I am here to share those with you today.

To begin with, I'd like to talk with you about some programs and activities that affect active duty personnel. I became president in 2001. As you recall, we were soon to enter the Iraq conflict of that era. At my prior institution, Olivet College, we instituted a program during the first Iraq war that I chose to replicate at Northwestern Michigan College. It has two tracks. We all know that when reservists are called to active duty, it is a disruption to their lives and to their family's lives. It also has an impact on their employer. While employers are to provide an opportunity for the returning serviceperson to regain a job when they return, there are practical issues that arise prior to that time. Quite often, military pay is substantially less than their civilian pay and the health care benefits provided are also fewer. So, NMC established a practice of making up the difference in pay and maintaining health benefits if an employee is called to active duty. We are fortunate that this has only occurred one time during my tenure. However, I will tell you that the serviceman and his family were extremely thankful. They did not have to worry about losing their house, or traveling down state for medical services. It provided some semblance of normalcy during an un-normal time. We established policies for students who were called up; policies that provided academic options and did not penalize them financially for having to leave school when it was not their doing. Fortunately, we have not had any incidents of this occurring.

We are working with Coast Guard Air Station Traverse City to design programs that serve their current personnel and that provide program opportunities for their families.